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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6087
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1465
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 6867
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 3000
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 1412
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SUBJECT: GROWING PERCEPTION THAT U.S. WILL ABANDON PAKISTAN

Classified By: Anne Patterson, For Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: News that the U.S. House and Senate had approved House Resolution 1 with language requiring the President report annually on Pakistan's efforts in the War on Terror predictably caused a stir in Islamabad. The media's interpretation of the bill narrowly focused on the perceived "certification requirement." Comparisons with the Pressler Amendment came fast and furious in newspapers and on television July 27 and 28. (Note: Aside from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman, government officials did not comment publicly on the resolution. End Note.) Combined with select coverage of recent statements by senior U.S. officials, the passage of the resolution fed the interpretation endorsed by some pundits that the U.S. is distancing itself from Pakistan in its hour of need. Most prominent newspapers (Urdu and English) also speculated that the U.S. was contemplating unilateral military action in the FATA. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During a private meeting with the Ambassador on July 27, Prime Minister Aziz raised recent statements by U.S. officials about Pakistan's efforts in the War on Terror, emphasizing the negative impact these statements were having on counter-terror cooperation. The Ambassador explained that many of the statements - by Under Secretary Burns, Fran Townsend, and Defense Intelligence Agency Director James Clapper - were being quoted out of context and exaggerated in the media. The Prime Minister said he understood the press was over-reacting but that both countries needed to manage media reactions during their respective campaign seasons. It was difficult, he added, for politicians and high officials to respond to sharp questions about U.S. aims to "invade Pakistan."

¶3. (U) President Musharraf, Foreign Minister Kasuri, and leading Senators talked to the media about recent U.S. statements on Pakistan on July 27. Musharraf said Pakistani forces were "fully capable" of pursuing extremists in FATA and didn't need intervention from the U.S. During a press conference with visiting British Foreign Secretary David Miliband on Friday, Foreign Minister Kasuri said recent U.S. statements were "irresponsible and counter-productive." Pakistan's Senate Foreign Relations Committee, headed by Secretary General of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League

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Mushaid Hussain, called for an end to Pakistan's cooperation in the War on Terror in the event of unilateral U.S. or NATO military action in Pakistani territory.

¶4. (C) Comment: With the end of the Chief Justice case, election season has kicked into high gear. Sensitivity to the media's select coverage of U.S. statements and legislative action will increase in the first few months, as Pakistani officials and politicians seize opportunities to stoutly defend Pakistan's sovereignty. Acknowledgment of Pakistan's sacrifices in the War on Terror will help to counter the perception that the U.S. is distancing itself from Pakistan, especially as select press coverage of House Resolution 1 stokes the anxieties of Pakistanis who remember the economic pain caused by the Pressler years. End Comment.

PATTERSON